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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000755

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG, AF/C

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CD](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SUDAN PUTS CAPTURED JEM MATERIEL ON DISPLAY IN
OMDURMAN

REF: A. KHARTOUM 749

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 727

[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 716

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Less than a week after a brazen rebel raid into the sprawling Khartoum suburb of Omdurman, the Sudanese Government put on an impressive display of captured weapons and materiel from the Chadian-supported Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) Darfur rebel group in Omdurman's historic Khalifa Square on May 16. Bullet, rocket and artillery damage on some surrounding buildings was still evident including artillery or rocket damage to Omdurman City Hall and to one of the minarets of the Al-Khalifa Mosque, next to Umma Party headquarters.

[1](#)2. (SBU) With most of the diplomatic corps in attendance, President Al-Bashir was joined by his Ministers of Defense and Interior, NISS DG Salah Ghosh, the Commissioner of Omdurman and the Governor of Khartoum in a ceremonial tent for a Quranic reading about how "victory comes from God." Everyone then adjourned to tour the two rows of captured JEM vehicles (about 50-60 captured more or less intact) plus a dramatic pile of 5-10 more burnt and blackened vehicles piled up into a picturesque heap. An additional line of tables featured all sorts of captured weapons and ammunition from AK-47s, grenades and bandoleers, to heavy machine guns and rockets with descriptive cards in Arabic describing the origin and type of the equipment. Khalifa Square was one of several actual battle sites on May 10.

[1](#)3. (SBU) As Al-Bashir and other senior officials, followed by the dip corps, passed the Sudanese units, they cheered while sitting in the captured vehicles, honking horns, revving engines and waving flags and rifles in the air. Some playfully swiveled around in vehicle-mounted AA guns and recoilless rifles. One thing that was clear was that the Sudanese fighters who defeated this JEM column inside Omdurman a short distance from the Nile bridges into Khartoum were made up of Sudanese police and NISS special units. Several NISS and police officers present emphatically confirmed that fact to CDA Fernandez and the only SAF official present that day seemed to be Minister of Defense Hussein himself.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Enthusiasm among Sudanese masses waiting to enter the exhibit was palpable as hundreds of young people waited expectantly in the heat to be allowed in once the VIPs departed. CDA stayed behind to watch as hundreds ran in to join the party with the dancing, flag-waving, rifle-brandishing units once the gates were opened. Some climbed the heap of charred, twisted metal to precariously dance and sway to Sudanese folk music. Curiosity and pride in the fighting prowess of Sudan repelling the "Chadian/Khalil Ibrahim invasion" seem to be the motivating factor for crowds

of jubilant well-wishers. Many of the young men danced while a handful of veiled girls with parasols accompanied by their chaperones coyly toured the rows of desert-camouflage painted landrovers with their cabs sawed off.

15. (C) CDA Fernandez spoke briefly with well-informed Khartoum Governor Al-Mutaafi before the ceremony. Al-Mutaafi noted that evidence of alleged Chadian involvement and Libyan bankrolling of the operation was clear. Some of the 80 child soldiers captured were indeed Chadian and interrogations had revealed the personal involvement of senior Chadian officials and Darfuri groups, like NMRD, who are "wholly-owned subsidiaries to the Deby regime" (NMRD, which is a JEM splinter is led by a former officer in Chadian President Deby's guard, Jibril Abdel Karim Bari). Independent daily "Al-Sudani" of May 17 featured a page one interview with Military Engineer Commander, BG Hassan Salih Omar who said that the JEM operation featured 321 vehicles filled with weapons with 1926 fighters participating in the operation (with no more than about a third actually making it into Omdurman). He added that the operation had cost about \$50 million to mount and that a Chadian Army "brigade" ("kateebe") had accompanied JEM into Sudan as far as Umm Jaras (due West of El-Fasher and slightly north of Tawila) before returning to Chad after "clashing with SAF units."

16. (C) Comment: The Sudanese put on an impressive display and there is no doubt that the bulk of what was placed there probably was from the JEM attack with perhaps some minor embellishment (a couple of rather largish artillery pieces looked out of place in a force essentially made up of land rovers with machine guns, rocket launchers and recoilless

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rifles). The enthusiasm of the masses was also sincere and JEM is not particularly popular or known in the capital (this enthusiasm was probably dampened on May 17 when one captured shell burst at the display injuring six people). But the show was also a brave front papering over the regime's initial panic and disarray in what could have been an even worse political-military debacle if Omdurman's police and some NISS units had not resisted vigorously and JEM had gotten across the Nile. End comment.
FERNANDEZ